

Module 1: Your Price Book

Note: Any words written on **BOLD** are referring to buttons in the software. Example, if the instruction wants you to click on a button that says “OK”, then the instruction will say:

Click **OK**

Because this document accompanies the Module 1 Video, you will see video times mentioned at certain points if you wish to find the corresponding section in the video. This will be in the following format:

(Video 4m 00s)

This will be an approximate time just before the start of the section.

Main Menu overview

In the centre of the Main Menu are the various options to look around the software, we will shortly be going into **My Settings**.

Before we do that a few other items on the Main Menu to point out:

You can see a list of the Installed Features that show you which edition of EstimatorXpress you have and which bonus packs you have.

To the right of this is the Software Status section – this shows you how up to date the software is, how long your support has to run, and how long your merchant links have to run.

On the far right of the Main Menu is our message box. This will change from time to time with a variety of messages from us – this will show things like information about updates, new support options (our brand new support site for example) and new bonus packs or offers.

Lastly, at the top right of the Main Menu you will see a section with your registered details. If you want to alter these (change of company name for example) then just left click on your details underneath where it says **Registered To**:

Ok, so now we have had a quick tour of the Main Menu, let's get started and have a look at the Master Price Book.

On the Main Menu click on **My Settings**. *(Video 2m 15s)* This brings you to the Settings menu – we will be looking at some of the other options in here later.

Now click on **My Price Books**. This will bring you into the Library of Price Books. We are going to open the Master Price Book in a moment. But first a quick explanation about selecting items in EstimatorXpress. There are three ways to open up items in EstimatorXpress (Price Books, Specifications, workbooks etc).

- You can double click on an item – be careful doing this – if you catch the bottom line of the item, because the software is based on Excel, the cursor will jump to the bottom of the Excel page – this will be hundreds of rows below, so you will find yourself having to scroll back up to the top of the screen.
- You can Right mouse click on an item – this gives you a popup menu which will include an “**Open**” option.
- You can select the item (in this case the Master Price Book) and click the “**Open**” option that is on the top menu. In this case you would click **Open Price Book**.

So now do one of the above to open the Master Price Book. You will be asked which section of the Price Book to open – click on **Labour** and then click on **Select**.

Overview of how we use Labour rates

(Video 4m 00s)

The rates are hourly, so if you pay people by the day, divide by 8.
For example: £160 a day becomes £20 an hour.

You will see we have many labourers and gangs in the list, probably many more that you actually employ. You are likely to have multi-trade people – you would set their rates to match the tasks they perform. So if “Bob” does bricklaying and also joinery, then set those two labour rates to match “Bob’s” rate.

How to edit your labour rates

(Video 6m 30s)

Click on the **Mass Editing Tool** button on the top menu and select **Edit Prices**
You will see that the Purchase Cost column turns white. This shows one of the main rules to remember in EstimatorXpress – you can only type in data where the background is white. If the background is blue you cannot type anything in.

You will see that there is a mix of individuals and gangs. You need to look at your individuals prices first. So look at a Bricklayer, then at Bricklayer’s Labourer. Once you have edited the price of the Bricklayer and the Bricklayer’s Labourer, you will then need to do a bit of mental arithmetic and change the prices for all the gangs that make use of them – THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY.

Tip! When you have typed in a number (cost) you must either press the Enter key on your keyboard, or use the mouse to click on the next field. If you type in a figure and have the cursor flashing in the field that you just typed in, you will find that the menu buttons no longer work. You must hit Enter or click elsewhere first to confirm the figure you have just typed in.

Once you have done this you can work your way through the Labour section of the price book. Once you have finished inputting prices, click on **Mass Editing Tool** and once again click on **Edit Prices** to switch this mode off. The column should go from white background to blue background.

Editing your material prices

(Video 10m 00s)

We can change which section of the price book we are looking at without having to leave the Price book. Assuming that you are still in the price book, on the top menu there is an option called **Section**. Click on the arrow to the right of this and select **Materials**.

*Tip! In most screens in EstimatorXpress you will see either a **Views** or **Filters** button. When you see one of these you can click on it and select a very useful item – **Highlight Selected Line**. It does what it says on the tin.....*

How to use filters in the price book

Before we do any price editing we are going to practice some of the ways that you can filter the price book. The material section of the price book can seem quite daunting, but with a few clicks you can break it down into much smaller sections and make it much easier to work with.

The first thing we are going to do is practice filtering out different suppliers. Some of you may only have HBXL price tracker, but many will have some of the other merchants whose terms we can download such as Jewson, Travis, Keyline, Tradepoint etc.

Click once on the column heading **Supplier**. You will see this selects the word “Supplier” and also the drop down filter button to the right of the column heading. This is the easiest way to see which drop down filter button to click on for any column heading.

Now click on the drop down filter button at you will see HBXL Price Tracker, Provisional and possibly some of the other merchants mentioned above. As a practice untick all merchants except for HBXL Price Tracker – leave HBXL Price Tracker with a tick. Then click **OK**.

The Price list will now only show products that are from HBXL Price Tracker. If you want, try it again and select a different supplier to show.

The second filter we are going to look at is the product type filter – for example Blocks, Insulation, Drainage etc. You can do this by selecting the column heading **Type** and using the drop down filter (the same as you did for the Supplier) or you can use the **Types** filter dropdown that we have put on the menu above – it is on the right side of the menu – to the right of **Find** and **Filters**.

For this exercise we are going to use the **Types** button on the top menu. Click on the drop down arrow in **Types** and it will pop up a big list of material types. For the purposes of this training search for **Blocks** and select it.

You should now have a short list of about a dozen items. If you have a longer list it may be because you are showing the blocks from several suppliers. To make the list smaller go to the Supplier column, click on the drop down filter and untick all suppliers except for HBXL Price Tracker. You should now have your list of just HBXL Price Tracker Block products.

Editing Material Prices

(Video 13m 30s)

Now that we have a small list, we can practice some editing of supplier prices.

This is the same process that we performed on the Labour section of the price book earlier.

Click on the **Mass Editing Tools** button on the menu and select **Edit Prices**.

The purchase cost column will now have a white background to show that you can now edit some of those prices.

Now edit the prices of some block products. For training I usually change the everyday blocks – the Solid Dense Concrete Block 7N 440 x 215 x 100mm. Remember these are priced by the M2.

Once you have done this, click on the **Mass Editing Tools** button on the menu and select **Edit Prices** again. This stops the editing mode. In the material section of the price book, when you do this a box pops up asking you if you would like your prices to be an adjustment. You should click **Yes** when this pops up. You will see that the blocks you have just edited the price on have now got an adjustment figure in the **Adjustment** column. This shows the percentage difference between your price and the downloaded list price. What this means is that if the average price of blocks goes up, your purchase cost will also go up automatically - we put the list price up or down when the market moves up or down on a product, so your supplier will do the same – this way your price goes up and down with your price being the same percentage below the list price.

For example: If we have blocks at £15 per m2 and you set your purchase cost to £10, then the adjustment percentage will be -33%. If the average price of blocks jumps up to £20 per m2, then your purchase cost will become £20 minus 33% = £13.40.

This means that once you have edited prices to match your suppliers and done as described above, then as the market moves up and down for material prices, your purchase costs will automatically move up and down in line with the market, but keeping your approximate discounted rate vs the market price.

For some more practice, let's look at another product type to edit. Click on the **Types** filter button on the top menu again, and this time select **Aggregate** from the drop down list. Again, if you have multiple suppliers showing, click on the Supplier column heading and the drop down and select only **HBXL Price Tracker** products.

*TIP! If you have a lot of items with ticks, click on **Select All** to untick everything in the list and you can then just tick the item you want*

You should now have a list of aggregate products. Once again click **Mass Editing Tools** and then **Edit Prices**. Now edit the price of the Ballast Bulk Bag (typically something like £30 to £35 – but put whatever price you pay), edit the Building Sand Bulk Bag and then the Building Sand Standard Bag. Once those 3 are done, click **Mass Editing Tools** and then **Edit Prices** to switch the editing mode off – remember to click **Yes** when asked about setting an adjustment. NOTE: Whilst we are looking at HBXL Price Tracker prices for the purposes of training, you can of course use the principles above to edit materials from other suppliers. You may use a principle supplier for most of your materials, but also use other suppliers for specific ranges. For example you may use Jewson or Travis Perkins for the majority of your products, but you buy all your aggregate products from a local quarry. In this example you could use the downloaded merchant prices for everything else, but also edit the HBXL Price Tracker prices for the aggregates and use those in your estimates - we will be looking at how you can pick and mix suppliers at the end of this module (My Favourites).

Bricks and how we deal with the numerous types on the market

(Video 21m 00s)

Before we go any further I want to have a few words about bricks. On the top menu click on the **Types** filter and select **Bricks**, and then click on the **Supplier** column and filter to just **HBXL Price Tracker** products. You should now see a list of bricks.

Because there are thousands of types of brick on the market, instead of trying to make a giant list of them all, we have a short list of typically priced Facing Bricks and Reclaimed Facing bricks. This means that you can simply pick a brick that is closest in price to the ones you will be using on a job. This process is done when creating an estimate via Mini-spec; this will be covered in detail in Module 3

Adding your own materials

(Video 22m 30s)

You can add any product you like to the price book, whether it is a labourer, a material, some equipment (Plant) or sundries or a sub contractor. Most items you may wish to add will be materials, so we are going to make a few products now to practice this. There is no limit to what you can add – you just need to know the following things:

- What is it called
- How much it costs
- How is it supplied – Each, EA (short for Each), by the metre, roll, m2 etc.

For example, if you wanted to add a new type of insulation product that was a sheet product (like Celotex or Kingspan) then you know that it is bought by the individual sheet price. Cavity Wall insulation is often bought in packs, so you would say that it is bought by a pack price.

When you want to create a new product, it is easiest to find an existing similar product in the price book first. You can then use this existing product as a template. You can of course create a new product that is totally new – you don't have to use an existing product.

For our first example we are going to create a new insulation product. So use the **Types** filter on the top menu to select Insulation. We are going to add Sheep Wool as a product. It is bought by the Role.

To start off, find an insulation product that has EA as its unit of purchase. Once you have clicked on it once, either right click or select from the top menu and click **New Resource**.

First edit the **Description** field, change it to say “**Sheeps Wool 4mx380mmx100mm**” You don’t have to be so specific with every product, but in this case the dimensions in the description will help you at a later date when you need to tell the software how much area the Wool Roll will cover.

The **Code:** field is automatically filled in.

Next we want to give this product a cost – remember this is the price to you ex Vat – for this example we will set the **Cost** to £47.50.

At this stage the **Description** and **Adjustment** fields should be left at zero.

Next we want to change the **Unit of Purchase**. You will see a drop down arrow that allows you to select different units of purchase – click on this and scroll down and then select **Roll**. You may have noticed that there is a + symbol to the right of the drop down arrow. If you click on this it allows you to create a new unit of purchase – for example you can buy some of the new eco products by the “Bale”; you would click on the + button and type in “Bale” and click **OK**.

Next we need to select a **Supplier**. You can select HBXL Price Tracker if you like, or you can click on the + button again and create a new supplier. This supplier can then be filtered, and will also appear if you create other new products that they supply.

Next we need to set the product **Type**. Because we started with an insulation product, it is already selected in this example.

Delivery and **Payment** need to be set to the correct times.

VAT should be the current default (20% at the time of writing)

The last field is **Wastage**. With a lot of building materials this is typically 7.5%, but you can set it to whatever you think is relevant.

Once you are happy that everything is correct – click **Ok**

Now let’s do another one, and also have a quick look at what we call Allowance products.

Once again use the **Types** filter on the top menu and this time select **Bathroom**. You should now see a small group of bathroom products, most of them being Allowance products. These are typical of the sort of products where the price could be anything as it is usually down to customer choice – in this example the customer is very likely going to be choosing which bathroom suite you fit (unless it is a budget fit out). You can see that we have a couple of bathroom suites already in the price book, but they are very much budget suites.

Click once on the **Bathroom Pack 3 Piece – Bath, Sink, Toilet (Allowance £250)** and then click on **New Resource**. In the description type “Bathroom Executive pack”. Because the name of the product can appear in the quote I recommend using descriptions for items like this that put them in a positive light. “Cheap bathroom suite” might not look so good on a quote. Ok now lets fill in the rest;

Unit Cost: 2500
Discount: 0
Adjustment: 0
Units of Purchase: EA
Supplier/Contractor: HBXL Price tracker or use the + button and add your own supplier
Type: Bathroom
Delivery: Whatever you think is normal
Payment: Whatever you think is normal
VAT: 20% (or whatever the current rate is)
Wastage: 7.5% (This wastage on items that don’t have wastage covers you for small amounts of “unforeseen” occurrences – if you really don’t want this then set it to 0%)

Click **OK** when done.

One thing you might notice is that any materials you create yourself have a **List Price** in red. This means that HBXL will not adjust them automatically. So you will need to manage these prices yourself. This is quite easy to do because you can use a filter to view the products you make yourself. To do this you use the **List Price** filter. Click on the filter arrow just to the right of the **List Price** column heading. This time hover your mouse over **Filter by Colour** – and you will see two squares appear – one is blue and the other one is red. Click on the red square and this will show only products with a red list price which should be any items that you have added to the material section of the price book.

To bring all the prices back click on the **List Price** filter button again and click on **Clear Filter from List Price**.

Tip! Don’t add materials that already exist. For example, if you see HBXL Price Tracker Building Sand Bulk bag and want to put your own in with your own price....dont! Just edit the price of the existing HBXL Price Tracker Building sand Bulk bag to match the price you are paying. Creating duplicate products makes it harder for you to pick them in the future, plus you will have to manually manage their prices. Only create a New Resource when it is for something that does not already exist in the price book.

Understanding and editing plant prices

(Video 34m 10s)

On the top menu go to the **Section** dropdown and select **Plant**

The plant section is a list of tools, equipment and of course large plant that you may use during the construction process. You may hire this equipment, or you may own the equipment. If you own the equipment you still need to charge for use of it, otherwise you are not covering your capital expenditure on these items and any profits you think you are making will in fact disappear when your accountant looks at your books.

Note: We will be taking an in depth look at profit in later modules

Just like the other sections of the pricebook, you can use **Mass Editing Tools, Edit Prices** to go up and down the list to adjust anything that needs a different price.

There are several items I want to highlight for you to look at.

Approximately 20 items down from the top are 3 plant items WITH driver: H-Mac, JCB and Mini Digger. The cost price of these three is a combination price (by the day) of equipment hire and also paying somebody to drive them. This could be a hired driver or it could be you or one of your employees. You need to make sure that the daily cost adds up correctly for plant hire AND labour to drive it. So if the plant costs £100 per day, and your employee costs £160 per day (£20/hour) then the total plant cost is £260 per day.

Next scroll down a page or so and look for the Portable Toilet and Site Cabin. These two are often used so make sure that their cost is correct – note that their cost is by the Week.

Just below these is the 20 Ton Tipper & Driver inc Land Fill Tax – again this has a driver cost he needs to be allowed for, and also a land fill tax amount that varies depending on which council is charging.

A few below this is the Skip 7m3 inc Land Fill tax. Again make sure this is the correct price including the council tipping fee. Most of the UK this is around £180 per skip, but in some parts like Oxford and large parts of the London area this can jump up to £250 to £280 per skip. If you forget to change this and have 10 skips on a job, you could be £1000 out of pocket!!

The last ones I want to point out is the Daily Parking Fee, Congestion charge and Bay Suspension Fee. Make sure these are correct. Parking in certain areas can be a large cost to you and getting it wrong (or not including it at all) could lose you a very large percentage of your final net profit.

Whilst I have highlighted the items above, please do have a look at all the lines in the plant section and change anything that stands out as being a very different price to what you are paying.

When you have finished editing your prices, it's the same routine as before: **Mass Editing Tools, Edit Prices** and the Purchase Cost column turns blue again.

Overview of subcontractor prices

(Video 39m 20s)

On the top menu go to the **Section** dropdown and select **Subcontractor**

This is a quick section to look at. In here you will see a list of assorted contractor types, and they are all priced at £1. The majority of the people in this section are used in a workbook called Subcontractor Quotations. This workbook allows you to type in a price for a subcontractor where they have given you a fixed price for a job. A typical example would be something like £500 for a plumber to supply and fit 3 radiators and connect them to the system (I made up that price so apologies if that sounds completely wrong!)

These subcontractors always stay with a cost of £1, and if you want to add your own subcontractors in (using the **New Resource** button) you can do so but remember to always give them a price of £1 – this will make a lot more sense when we look at the Subcontractor Quotation workbook in Module 3.

The one other line in here that I do want to talk about is the Flat Roof Waterproofing cost. You will see it is set at £40. This is a metre rate to supply and fit the Flat Roof Waterproofing. Because this is traditionally priced by roofers as a supply and fit cost, we have done the same in the software. £40 is typical for a bitumen type finish; if fibreglass, GRP or other more expensive system is to be used, then you would edit the price of this to be something like £90 to £125. There are of course many different types so just make sure you adjust this price to match the system being fitted.

Overview of sundry costs

(Video 43m 30s)

Finally we want to look at the **Sundry** section of the price book.

On the top menu go to the **Section** dropdown and select **Sundry**

Similar to the Subcontractor section of the price book, this is a list of £1 people. They are mostly used in the preliminary workbooks to assign costs to people like structural engineers, surveyors, planning applications, insurance etc. Basically costs that you as the builder may incur prior to construction starting, but ones which you still need to include in your quote (unless you don't enjoy profits of course.....)

As per all the other sections of the price book, you can create your own sundry costs using the **New Resource** button.

Ok, that is the price book covered, so lets look at one more option on the **Settings** menu to conclude Module 1

Click on **Close** to come out of the Price Book. Once you are in the Library of Price Books screen, click on **Close** again to return to the **Settings** menu.

Using My Favourites to default your software to use your preferred suppliers

(Video 45m 00s)

Click on the option **My Favourites**.

This setting is useful if you have a merchant link with one of our linked merchants such as Jewson, Travis Perkins, Keyline, Tradepoint, etc. If you only have HBXL Price Tracker and are editing those prices to match your assorted merchants, then you will not use this function.

My Favourites allows you to set whose prices you want the software to use – it does a global swap between merchants.

The most straight forward way is to click on the circle on the **ALL TYPES** line that corresponds to your favourite supplier.

What you can also do is pick and mix. So you might buy your aggregates from one supplier, and your Timber from a different one.

My typical example is to set Jewson (for example) as my main supplier by selecting them on the **ALL Types** line. I then select HBXL Price Tracker on the **Aggregate** line because I use a local merchant for my aggregate products, and in the price book I have already set my HBXL Price Tracker aggregate prices to match those of my independent supplier where I buy my aggregates.

Once you have got your settings how you want them, you click on **Apply**. What this does is go into the Specifications and swap one supplier's product for the equivalent from another supplier. Please note that this only works with HBXL Price Tracker and the merchants for whom we have links.

Congratulations – you have finished Module 1. Remember the old adage:

“Put good in; get good out”

By spending a few hours tweaking your price book to have the correct costs, you will then have a good base set of data to use in your estimates. This will then allow you to use the data far more accurately for:

- Estimating your actual costs
- Correctly calculating profits (Net and Gross)
- Negotiating discounts and deals with your clients (if you don't actually know how much profit you are going to make, how can you know how much you can allow your price to be negotiated down by your client before you start agreeing to a loss making figure???)
- Having a forward view of your cash flow.
- Monitoring costs during the build to spot cost overruns quickly

End of Module 1